CONTEMPORARY MODELS FOR SOCIAL ACTION

ON THE LOCAL CHURCH LEVEL

A Professional Project

Presented to

the Faculty of the

School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

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by

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This professional project, completed by

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*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Purpose. The purpose of this project is to attempt to arrive at specific models for accomplishing social action as one aspect of the total ministry of the Christian Church. Social action is a much debated aspect of the Christian faith as that faith is enacted by institutional churches, but this debate seems to overlook the theological foundation for such activity on the part of churches. In addition to a theological basis for Church social action, there are practical expressions of such ministry efforts which seem to validate the involvement of churches in social action.

Method. The project will first seek to develop a theological rationale for Church social action, and to indicate the possibility for this being accomplished without a church/sect dichotomy developing. Various models for accomplishing Church social action are surveyed with an attempt to point out strengths and weaknesses for application on the local church level. In addition to case studies some interview results serve as material for this section. Finally, two models are suggested as most promising for local church social action as part of a general discussion of the importance of this aspect of a total Christian ministry.

AN INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The institutional church of today is faced with an existential dilemma of major proportions. Having come through a period of consistent increases in attendance and financial support, the church of today is faced with decreases in both categories. Many have attributed this to a reaction against the activism of institutional churches (particularly liberal Protestant denominations) during the period capped by the 1960's when the country was swept-up in mass movements directed at bringing about fundamental changes within our society. Dean Kelley indicts liberal churches for their runaway activism at the expense of lay support. Kelley contends that liberal churches have failed to provide basic religious meaning for their congregations, and that real commitment can result only from such a meaning system.[1] Jeffrey Hadden and Charles Longino, in a recent case study of activist congregations, say that while such meaning systems must be developed incorporating traditional beliefs, it can only be through involvement with the world that any lasting meaning can be achieved.[2]

The type of activism engaged in by churches and church persons during the 1960's had both positive and negative aspects. That many persons with religious affiliations made significant contributions to the civil rights and anti-war movements can not be denied. However, it is also true that many clergy engaged in demonstrations and other types

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[1] Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972)

[2] Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles F. Longino, *Gideon's Gang* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974)

of activism while leaving the vast majority of their congregations sitting behind remaining uncommitted, uninformed, and too often even unaware of the really vital issues at stake in these struggles. As a result, many lay persons have become alienated from the more liberal churches and their social agendas. In some cases, liberals themselves have become disillusioned by the churches, whom they have seen as too identified with the basic power structures of society to bring about real change. In both respects, liberal churches especially find themselves in difficult positions regarding their involvement in social activism.

Because of the struggle to maintain their existence at past levels of institutional size and financial stability, many churches have pulled back from controversy and direct involvement in social action. Along with this have come cutbacks in denominational staffs on national and regional levels because of the availability of fewer funds. In many cases it has been those agencies which are most involved in social action whose funds have been reduced or eliminated.

In light of the present situation within the various denominations in this country, it seems imperative that meaningful and effective models for social action on the local church level be developed and shared, and that such models be seen as appropriate by substantial sections of church memberships. I intend to demonstrate that such models for doing social action on a local church level either already exist or can be devised so that a significant impact on societal structures can be accomplished.

The social activism of the churches as seen in the 1960's in many ways is a thing of the past, but the possibility for carrying out meaningful programs for bringing about social change is a present reality.

The Church as an institution is called on to respond creatively to the needs of all God's children, and to do so will require imagination and skill, and a commitment based on a fundamental understanding of the Gospel message as calling all of us to responsible discipleship in a manner modeled on the ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Before describing some contemporary models for local church social action, it is necessary to define a basic Christian understanding which should undergird such activity. The life and teaching of Jesus Christ provide the model for the ongoing life of the Church in the understanding of discipleship to which it leads us. It is within this context that all social action done by the institutional churches must ultimately stand.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer articulated a theological position calling the institutional church to an existence as a community of disciples. I want to explore the basic development of his theology and to come to an understanding of how the ethical implications of his thought might relate to the Church today. Although this will be more fully developed later, I can state briefly some of the main points I want to examine in Bonhoeffer's thought.

Bonhoeffer's understanding of discipleship is rooted in the concept of Jesus Christ as the "concrete realization" of God. This realization places Jesus Christ in the midst of the world, and defines his existence as being "for others" when lived in its fullest sense. He locates the awakening of an awareness to this imperative to live for others within the community of believers comprising the Church. An existence as a disciple, obedient to Jesus' call, is the type of life which Bonhoeffer says the Christian must live. This is a life lived in the midst of the world,

and may involve sacrifice just as Jesus' life did.

From such a definition of the Church as a community of disciples, I want to expand this understanding of the Church's life to include involvement in the everyday concerns which necessitate social change. By briefly examining Josiah Royce's thoughts on "loyalty", and Gordon Kaufman's treatment of the doctrine of the Church, I hope to point in the direction of the type of Church which can and must respond to the needs of society with meaningful forms of social action.

The Church does not define its existence by the programs it may sponsor, but if the Church truly exists as the Word of God embodied in the world, the ongoing witness to God's power as the Body of Christ, then the Church must be able to respond with responsible forms of love. Jesus' agenda was one which the modern-day Church need not improve on, but if it could seriously begin to act on this agenda, then a new power for good and creative life would be released in the world.

There are examples of such creative activity which will be detailed in the description of several models for doing social action on the local church level. Several types of models will be evaluated with the intent of pointing to the most significant contributions each may make to future social action done in the local church setting.

The underlying premise in the following work is that the Church in its institutional expressions and individual Christians both have before them a model for involvement in the world in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. A commitment to enacting as faithfully as possible this model in today's world will lead to social action. I hope to demonstrate that social action is called for by the Church acting responsibly

through its institutional forms in today's world, and to illustrate the
means for implementing social action on the local church level.

CHAPTER I

A THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PRESENT AND FUTURE SOCIAL ACTION

A. THE MEANING OF DISCIPLESHIP IN BONHOEFFER'S THEOLOGY

In order to establish a case for the Church's involvement in social action as a necessary part of an authentic institutional style for the church, I hope to develop a theological rationale for Church social action. To accomplish this purpose I will attempt to analyze the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, particularly examining his understanding of discipleship as it applies to individual Christian existence and more generally to the life of the Church.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a young German theologian who through his writings and own life asked many of the most difficult questions which the Church of today must answer. Bonhoeffer articulated the concept of "religionless Christianity", the concept which was the culmination of his theological development. The principal thrust of this key feature of his thought was to move his understanding of the faith of humankind from the level of "religious practice" to the real and existential realm of living out one's faith in the world. Bonhoeffer's concern was to describe a type of Christian experience which would locate a person within the world as he acted out his faith commitment, rather than a religious practice which would limit the Christian commitment to the church rituals alone.

The implications of this challenging concept are summed up in Bonhoeffer's Christological position. Stated simply, this position is:

"Christ did not die for the Church, but for the world."[3] What Christ's

dying for the world means for Bonhoeffer is something I must examine as a

beginning to an exploration of his complete Christological development.

By focusing on Bonhoeffer's Christological formulations I hope to discover

the meaning of discipleship and of the Church in Bonhoeffer's thought. It

will also be helpful to the larger purpose to see how this part of his

theology relates to his more explicit ethical discussions.

1. Jesus' call to discipleship

a. Practical obedience. In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*,

Bonhoeffer analyzes Jesus' call to discipleship and its meaning for a

Christian's life. He considers this from a biblical perspective, but

more importantly he deals with individual response to such a call and

how such a call might influence the Church. Bonhoeffer seeks to correct

the idea that faith without obedience is in fact authentic faith, and all

that is necessary for our salvation. Bonhoeffer says, "Faith is only

real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes

faith in the act of obedience."[4]

This obedience of which Bonhoeffer speaks is not only an accept-

ance of Jesus Christ as Saviour, but more than this it is an actual res-

ponse to Jesus' call to discipleship. Bonhoeffer, in examining the story

of the rich young ruler, says that the appropriate response would have

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[3]Martin Marty, *The Place of Bonhoeffer* (New York: Association
Press, 1962),p. 17.
[4]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York:
Macmillan, 1949), p. 69.

been to follow Jesus' call. "The one thing that matters is practical obedience,"[5] and the rich young ruler misses his opportunity by not obeying when Jesus bids him follow.

Such practical obedience leads to a new set of relationships, both to God and to others. Our obedience allows us to believe in God's saving grace, but it also calls us into a new and more responsible stance towards our neighbor. Being a neighbor does not define another person's relationship to me, but rather speaks of how my own life should be structured.

> Neighborliness is not a quality in other people, it is simply their claim on ourselves. Every moment and every situation challenges us to action and obedience....We must get into action and obey.[6]

The act of being a neighbor leads us to the example of Christ, and to the suffering which he endures on the cross. The call to discipleship is a summons to a radical commitment of a person's whole life. It is in Bonhoeffer's view the only way we can truly live, but we gain new life only through participating in the death of Jesus on the cross. The following quotation answers the question as to what such participation in Jesus' death might mean for our lives.

> As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death--we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time--death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call.[7]

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[5] Ibid., p.81.
[6] Ibid., p.86.
[7] Ibid., p.99.

b. <u>Jesus as concrete revelation.</u> The call of Jesus is to "come and die". Bonhoeffer says that it is through such a death to the "old man", the sinner who we have been, that we may indeed truly live. The call also is not a summons away from the world, but into the world. Christ died for the world, and in our dying we too become agents of Christ for the world.

This Jesus Christ who calls us is for Bonhoeffer the "concrete realization" of God in the world. Through Christ, God and man are reconciled, and by this reconciliation the fallen sinful nature of humankind is overcome. New humanity is possible by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the suffering event of the crucifixion. For Bonhoeffer, Jesus Christ becomes the "word of the freedom of God."[8] That word is present through this revelatory act and because of this we find God one we can know through the proclamation of the Church. This is not to diminish or limit God's transcendent nature, but for Bonhoeffer this means that "God is not free from man, but for man,"[9] and thus Bonhoeffer says the Christ-event has affirmed that God freely binds himself to humankind in history. Bonhoeffer points to concrete revelatory events as the verification of God's coming to humanity in its midst. The ongoing witness of the Church becomes one such locus of God's activity in the world.

God comes to us freely and saves us through His grace. Bonhoeffer, however, states a necessary corrective to this Reformation doctrine as it is usually voiced. As we have pointed out, faith authenticated by

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[8]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being* (New York: Harper, 1962), p. 90.

[9]Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, op. cit.

obedience is necessary as humankind's response to God's saving activity in Jesus Christ. In *The Cost of Discipleship* Bonhoeffer formulates his now famous doctrine of costly grace and cheap grace. The grace which can save us is costly grace, but a faith commitment only begins with this form of grace. For Bonhoeffer, discipleship is the "invariable corollary"[10] to grace. He says that costly grace becomes cheap grace without the response of discipleship.

So Bonhoeffer sees the necessary response to Jesus Christ as discipleship, as practical obedience to the Word of God addressed to us in this time and place. Where does such a word come to us? and to what are we called?

> ...God cannot be used as a stop-gap. We must not wait until we are at the end of our tether; he must be found at the centre of life: in life, and not only in death; in health and vigour, and not only in suffering; in activity, and not only in sin. The ground for this lies in the revelation of God in Christ. Christ is the centre of life....[11]

These words come from the collection compiled from writings Bonhoeffer did while in prison in the last years of his life. They speak of a God who meets us in the very midst of life, and not of a God who comes to us only on the peripheries of our existence. The "worldliness" of this line of thought is what makes it important for an understanding of Bonhoeffer's thought. It points to the religionless Christianity which Bonhoeffer saw as the appropriate faith response for a mature believer in what he called a "world come of age". Bonhoeffer locates God, through the concrete nature of Jesus' revelation, in the center of all creation.

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[10]Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, p. 53.

[11]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 143.

This revelation of Christ occurs in "his real presence at the center of human existence; his real presence at the center of history; his real presence at the center of nature."[12]

The concrete character of revelation seen in Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of Bonhoeffer's Christological development. He asserts a radically Christocentric interpretation of existence, and this extends to his understanding of God's revelatory action in the Old Testament. But at this stage of Bonhoeffer's overall theological development the locus of Christ's presence at the center of creation is seen as the Church. It is the shift from a Christ located in the Church to a Christ located in the world which signals Bonhoeffer's move to a "religionless Christianity"--but this does not mean to him a Christianity without the Church, but rather a faith expressed in a Church not for itself, but for the world, a Church for others.

One note may be added on the relationship of discipleship to the concrete nature of revelation. Discipleship is the means whereby faith becomes concrete, existential. Bethge says "discipleship is for Bonhoeffer the recovery of concrete place and time for the Reformer's misused term 'faith'".[13] Discipleship becomes the means whereby we participate in the ongoing revelation of Christ in the world, and it is also the way in which humankind lives out its faith in the world. The Christian exhibits his faith in the acts of response made in the world to the call of discipleship presented in the words and actions of Jesus Christ.

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[12]Marty, p. 152

[13]Ronald Gregor Smith (ed.), *World Come of Age* (London: Collins, 1967), p. 54.

The life of discipleship is life lived for others. Bonhoeffer came to see Jesus as the "man for others", and as such the example after which the Church forms its own being. The lives of those who believe are also to be lived for others, for it is in such living for others, for my neighbor, that life comes to have meaning. This opportunity for meaning occurs in the Church, and as the discovery of this relationship becomes realized the further call to live in the world is understood. For Bonhoeffer meaning comes to us through the encounter with the neighbor, but it is not the neighbor, but Christ in the neighbor, by which one's living is defined.

I have attempted to show Bonhoeffer's Christology as an assertion of God's presence in the center of creation, as realized in the concrete nature of revelation seen in Jesus Christ. That this "concrete revelation" serves as the place from which persons are called to a life of faith and discipleship is the consequence of the understanding of participation in Christ's life, death and resurrection. I now need to examine how the Church is defined in relationship to such a Christological understanding, and further to examine the ethical implications of a life of discipleship.

2. Discipleship and the Church

a. Demands on the Church. Just as Bonhoeffer saw God operative in the center of creation, so too did he understand the Church as involved in the midst of human life and not on the perimeter. Bonhoeffer put it thus: "The Church stands not where human powers give out, on the borders, but in the centre of the village."[14] Because of this understanding of the Church

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[14]Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, p. 124.

as existing in the center of things, Bonhoeffer went on to call for the Church's immersion in the real world, for a style exemplified by its living "for others".

The Church is the ongoing institutional instrument for concretizing the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Church does this through its authoritative proclamation. The Church's proclamation is authentic "only when and where it does not lack concreteness."[15] This concreteness is characterized by the participation of the Church at the center of life.

> The community of Christ is not the meetingplace of those removed from life, but the centre of life; the centre of (humankind) 'who persevere together in the midst of the world, in the depths of it, in its trivialities and bondages.' [16]

This community of believers who persevere together in the midst of the world exists neither as a religious movement which is cut-off from the ongoing traditions of the Church, nor as a religious society which is isolated from the practical obedience in the world which Bonhoeffer sees as embodied in a faith commitment. The Church fulfills its mission not by preserving itself apart from the world, but by gaining its real meaning in the midst of the world.

b. Ethical implications. Bonhoeffer sets the agenda for the community of disciples which the Church is to be.

> The only way in which the Church can defend her own territory is by fighting not for it but for the salvation of the world. Otherwise the Church becomes a 'religious society' which fights in its own interest and thereby ceases at once to be the Church of God and of the world. And so the first demand which is made of those who belong

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[16]Ibid., p. 43.

to God's Church is not that they should be something in themselves, not that they should, for example, set up some religious organization or that they should lead lives of piety, but that they should be witnesses to Jesus Christ before the world.[17]

For Bonhoeffer the Church is called to witness to Jesus Christ before the world. This summons reaches out to a modern-day Church struggling to maintain its own existence, and says to it that only through living for others can that existence be maintained in any authentic form.

Arnold Come, in his book, *Agents of Reconciliation*, states this understanding of a church called to be in the world:

> the Christian church and the individuals who comprise it are not simply the self-contained reconciled community but also the agency of reconciliation. The maturity and acceptance that the church knows in Christ is not meant for itself alone but for the world. In coming to understand the actual content of the reconciliation it has received, the church is forced to understand that the gift it has received it must give to the world.[18]

Come speaks of a mature Christianity embodied in a Church which must be in the world reconciling that same world to God--furthering the reconciling activity of Jesus as seen in his life and death on the Cross. Bonhoeffer, too, has spoken of the reconciliation of God and world accomplished in Jesus Christ. This reconciliation is both a sign of the new maturity of human existence and a pattern for the mature Church's activity in the world.

Bethge has this to say of Bonhoeffer's concept of mature Christian faith:

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[17]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 68-9.

[18]Arnold Come, *Agents of Reconciliation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 44.

> The adult in faith is he who answers the question 'Who is Jesus Christ for us today?' in personal, responsible participation in present life. And the adult church is not the church which exposes its secrets of faith cheaply, but that which exposes itself in its very existence. Living for others is its *raison d'etre.*[19]

Bethge precedes this statement with an analysis of Bonhoeffer's views on religion. In it he states that the Church is to go on witnessing and proclaiming with the "great terms" it has used through the centuries. But if the Church cannot relate its message to a secularized world "in such a way that (its) essence in worldly life can be immediately seen",[20] then it should be silent. Bonhoeffer wants the Church to move beyond its traditional religious functions to a non-religious existence founded in a central involvement in the being and meaning of Jesus Christ. And that means being in the world, for others. Bethge sees Christian faith called by Bonhoeffer to seek a "dialectical identity with this world and with Christ as one who is, in suffering, absolutely free'for this world'."[21]

We can look to Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* for some additional insight into his agenda for an "adult church" in a newly-acknowledged secular world. I have already outlined the major implications for the Church found in the Christological focus of Bonhoeffer's theology. Additional comments will serve to specify the ethical dimension of these implications for the Church. Some remarks will follow as to the ways in which the Church might respond to Bonhoeffer's challenging life and works.

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[19]Smith, p. 82.

[20]Ibid., p. 88.

[21]Smith, op. cit.

For Bonhoeffer the Church's existence can be defined in these terms: "The Church is nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken form."[22] As such the Church is called to make real the presence of Jesus Christ in its proclamation and in its action.

The function of ethics in Bonhoeffer's understanding is related to his concept of the Church. "After Christ has appeared, ethics can have but one purpose, namely the achievement of participation in the reality of the fulfilled will of God."[23] The participation in the reality of God's will as fulfilled and embodied in Jesus Christ is an activity which is to occur within the Church. Bonhoeffer describes ethics as formation, i.e. as descriptive of the way in which Jesus Christ takes form in the world. He says:

> Ethics as formation is possible only upon the foundation of the form of Jesus Christ which is present in his Church. The Church is the place where Jesus Christ's taking form is proclaimed and accomplished. It is this proclamation and this event that Christian ethics is designed to serve.[24]

The proclamation of the Word of God becomes the focal point for the life of the Church. The Church, as "the community which comes into being around this word"[25], is not to seek domination over the world, but to stand as a servant to participate in the fulfillment of the divine Word of God.

The Church and the individual believer are called to an existence as disciples who are motivated by Jesus' call, and whose character becomes

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[22] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, p. 21.

[23] Ibid., p. 78.

[24] Ibid., p. 25.

[25] Ibid., p. 265

participation as servants in the redemption of humankind according to God's

plan. The discipleship of the Church only occurs through the individuals

who participate in its ongoing life. Bonhoeffer saw such discipleship as

"personal engagement",[26] and the Church as a community of disciples each

one committed to a life in Christ's suffering and ultimate victory.

It is within the Church that we discover our humanity, and because

of this discovery we reach out to our neighbor and live as one under the

Cross in the real world. That Bonhoeffer does expect us to live in the

real world is made clearer by his use of the ethical categories,

"ultimate" and "penultimate". He describes these categories in this way:

> God's justification by grace and faith alone is this ultimate word.
> But this word reaches a person who lives his life in the 'penultimate'.
> The 'things before the last' have, indeed, no value of their own, but
> they are related to the ultimate. To remain in the realm of the
> penultimate rather than to find ultimate solutions may be the way to
> point all the more genuinely to the ultimate, which God will speak
> in His own time.[27]

So we are called to live in the "penultimate realm"--not seeking for

ultimate solutions, but to live fully in this time and place. This be-

comes for Bonhoeffer the ethical imperative of Christian existence, and

this imperative reminds us of his understanding of God's word as coming

to us at the center of life, and not in the gaps of our existence. God

comes as Jesus Christ to the very center of history, and calls us not

away from life, but to a life to be lived more fully because of the new

existence possible in Christ.

As Bonhoeffer says, ethics is truly "an ethics of the cross rather

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[26]Smith, p. 55.

[27]Marty, p. 33.

than an ethics of glory. Man does not become god, but because God became man, man can become man."[28]

 c. The Church in the world. Bonhoeffer "calls the church to the world",[29] both in his theology and in his life story which closes with his martyrdom. His Christology becomes the foundation for an understanding of the Church and Christian ethics which involves humankind and the Church as human institution in the midst of the world. Through faith and obedience each person is to live in response to the call to discipleship in such a way as to make more fully real the Word of God as proclaimed through the presence in this world of Jesus Christ.

 For Bonhoeffer, discipleship is the distinctive lifestyle required of a Christian. And for the Church the requisite lifestyle is to shed its religious cocoon and enter into the midst of life, just as Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his own time.

 The challenge to the Church to locate itself squarely within the world and truly with humanity continues to be heard today. Bonhoeffer's call to servanthood is echoed in Gustavo Guitierrez's theology. Guitierrez calls upon the Church to "cease considering itself as the exclusive place of salvation and orient itself towards a new and radical service of people."[30] As with Bonhoeffer, Guitierrez understands salvation as an occurrence within the world, in the midst of life.

 The call to discipleship continues to confront those who would

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[28]Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, p. 213.

[29]Marty, p. 33.

[30]Gustavo Guitierrez, A *Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 256.

truly live as Christians with the summons to practical obedience. To respond truly to this call requires an ongoing commitment to God's will for our lives and for all humanity.

I have tried to show in this brief explication of Bonhoeffer's thought the radical demands of Christian existence implicit in his understanding of Jesus' call to discipleship. To broaden the understanding of the commitment which seems called for in a life of discipleship, I wish briefly to examine the concept of loyalty as developed by Josiah Royce. My aim is to illumine the basic connection between commitment and discipleship.

B. LOYALTY AND DISCIPLESHIP

1. Loyalty in Josiah Royce's thought

In his book, *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, Josiah Royce develops an understanding of loyalty as the point around which one might center his/her "entire moral world".[31] It is the organizing principle of a person's activity in the moral sphere. Royce defines loyalty in a preliminary way as "the willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion to a cause."[32] Royce stresses that such devotion is an ongoing and practical activity. Loyalty occurs in a social context, as one contracts with others with similar loyalties. Within such a context a person finds something outside which calls forth service, and inside, one's being

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[31]Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (New York: MacMillan, 1908), p. 15.

[32]Ibid., p. 16.

becomes "enriched and expressed"[33] through such service. Loyalty becomes

the means whereby humankind discovers a unifying force for active living.

Royce describes a cause of loyalty as "a possible object of loyalty

only in case it is such as to join many persons into the unity of a single

life."[34] Such a cause is good inasmuch as it creates loyalty in others.

Royce describes this as "loyalty to loyalty".[35] The central thesis of his

whole philosophy of loyalty can be summed up in the phase: "loyalty is the

whole duty of man."[36] But loyalty is more than a moral summary of duty,

for Royce points beyond the concept of loyalty to loyalty, to an under-

standing of loyalty as humankind's reaching for the Eternal in this life.

> Loyalty is the Will to Believe in something eternal, and to express
> that belief in the practical life of a human being.[37]

Royce comes to an understanding of human existence which is based on the

loyalty one exhibits toward others, but more so to the Eternal.

2. Commitment and discipleship

The fact that loyalty can be seen in these terms is useful for a

fuller understanding of discipleship and commitment. Loyalty may be

understood as the ground of our commitment. And following from this,

discipleship is the practical manifestation of such loyalty to the Eternal

or, for the Christian, to Jesus Christ. For Bonhoeffer, God's word as

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[33]Ibid., p. 42.

[34]Ibid., p. 107.

[35]Ibid., p. 118.

[36]Ibid., p. 140.

[37]Ibid., p. 357.

seen in Jesus Christ becomes the ultimate source of our loyalty. It may also be appropriate for us to understand Jesus Christ as a sign of God's loyalty to us.

By combining Royce and Bonhoeffer, one could say that loyalty to Jesus Christ as the expression of God's word to us becomes the unifying force in human existence. Our loyalty touches others who also are loyal to Christ, and this shared loyalty becomes the basis of a loyalty to others which we carry out through the practical obedience of discipleship. Royce would call this "universal loyalty",[38] or a loyalty which seeks to carry out the duty one person has to another. That this duty is to the neighbor seems to align Royce once again with Bonhoeffer in an understanding of the appropriate role a person is to play in human society.

I will recall later this point about discipleship as living out a meaningful loyalty in the world. It also seems important to note that our meaning springs from the loyal service we render to a cause outside ourselves. This source of meaning may be one way of calling the Church to responsible activity in the world.

C. THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

1. A comparison of Gordon Kaufman and Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Christian Discipleship

Recalling the preceding analysis of Bonhoeffer's theology it is possible to see meaning for both individual Christian existence and the Church within his explication of a Christ-centered life of discipleship.

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[38]Ibid., p. 145.

The shape of the Church's response to the demands of the call to discipleship is the next point I want to consider, and hope to accomplish this through a comparison of Bonhoeffer's position with that of Gordon Kaufman.

a. Revelation in Kaufman's theology. A central point in Kaufman's theology is his understanding of revelation, and in order to develop his position on discipleship it is necessary to briefly describe how this concept of revelation takes shape.

The understanding for Kaufman of God's revelation is historical; and this implies a three-fold structure of the knowledge of God.

> God's being is present in and with every moment of history (including this present), it is in a special way bound up with the historical person-event Jesus Christ, and it utterly transcends these (and all other) finite loci as the ground and basis of them all.[39]

For Kaufman the revelation of God through Jesus Christ is experienced again in our present existence through the ongoing witness of the community of faith. Our faith response is not to an immediate private revelation, but rather to the presence of God mediated to us by the ongoing process of God's presence embodied in community proclamation.

b. Discipleship. The understanding of Christian discipleship which Gordon Kaufman puts forward is placed in the context of the ongoing history of the Christian tradition. Christian faith and its impact on the world and individuals can be understood according to Kaufman only through the realization of the history of God's revelation and humankind's response to it. Therefore, a proper understanding of the individual

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[39]Gordon Kaufman, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 101.

Christian can be arrived at only in reference to the Christian community

As Kaufman says:

> Individual Christian existence, therefore, must always be understood
> as possible only within the matrix of communal Christian existence
> and history.[40]

The work a Christian does in the world is seen as

> an expression of the life of the community and as a further contribu-
> tion to this developing history: his individual life has its meaning
> and definition within this communal existence. [41]

The model for Christian discipleship is taken from the example

seen in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His love and

suffering are avenues to achieving a greater degree of justice in the

world, and serve to illustrate the kind of life a true Christian disciple

is expected to live. Jesus' call to Simon and Andrew to follow him (as

seen in Mark's gospel Mark 1:16-18) is a call that comes to all who would

be true Christian disciples. That call is to follow on a path that may

lead, as it did for Jesus, to death on a cross. This following must

take shape as involvement in the concrete situations and movements of this

world. Kaufman illustrates throughout his theology that God's activity

occurs in the world, and therefore, if human activity is to further the

possibility of a full realization of the Kingdom of God, it must be action

in the actual historical situation. The understanding of man under the

cross, and of our involvement in the world, both echo significant features

of Bonhoeffer's thought.

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[40]Ibid., p. 501.

[41]Ibid.

Kaufman points to the fact that our involvement in the world must always be in tension with the demands of the cross.

> Since precisely the cross must be the criterion for the Christian,
> his participation in such movements, however worthy they may be, can
> never be without reservation. His work within them must always be
> directed toward support of their constructive and reconciling activity,
> always critical of their tendencies to self-idolatry and the uses of
> this-worldly types of power which tend to perpetuate or even increase
> the chaos in human affairs.[42]

Humankind must recognize God's activity in the Church--but since this is an human institution, its activity must be subject to the same kind of criticism that Jesus leveled against the Church of his time. This criticism should serve as a necessary corrective to the Church's life and guard against its possible corruption by its necessary involvement in the world.

Discipleship, in Kaufman's thought, becomes the standard of commitment which serves to call the Church's ministering activity into question as the norm by which each program ought to be measured. For the individual the call to discipleship is a summons to live as Christ did, and no worldly activity should displace that as the standard for one's living. In response to Christ's saving event--the most decisive revelation of God's working in the history of the world--one is to live a life dedicated to building up the Kingdom of God. Kaufman expressed it thus:

> In confidence that the forgiving love which has broken into their
> hearts will finally also overcome even the most disobedient, believers
> can offer themselves as agents of that redeeming love in the present
> historical situation.[43]

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[42]Ibid., p. 505.

[43]Ibid., p. 511.

For Kaufman, God's activity in the world can be seen as reconcilia-
tion, and therefore we must be (as Arnold Come says) "agents of reconcilia-
tion". Bonhoeffer, too, sees God's reconciling activity in the world
through the fact of Jesus Christ's presence among us, and therefore dis-
cipleship also implies engagement in that ongoing reconciling activity.
One further note: While Bonhoeffer calls on us to live in the world,
Kaufman admonishes us lest our activity become too worldly. However, it
seems that Kaufman would agree that humankind must live in this world as
"agents of that redeeming love in the present historical situation."[44]
But Kaufman's warning implies that our acting is to be in the world, not
of the world.

c. The Church. Kaufman describes the Church's proper activity in
these words:

> She needs to engage in prophetic criticism not only of the social and
> moral evils in society, but also of the methods which misguided
> worldly men too often use, in the supposition that they will bring
> good in their wake. She must continuously experiment with novel forms
> of ministry and service which can bring God's reconciling love and
> power into newly emerging patterns of life and institutional structures,
> as well as into hitherto untouched concerns of society and culture.[45]

Once again, as we have seen with Bonhoeffer, the emphasis is on the Church's
instrumental participation in bringing God's reconciling love and power
to bear on human situations. Kaufman calls for new institutional patterns
to implement a more effective response by the Church as it acts as an
agency of God's reconciling love in the world.

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[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., p. 495.

One statement of Kaufman's points to how the Church relates to the demands of discipleship that one live a new life in Christ.

> Christian existence..is a transformed existence within a new community which serves to express and draw attention to, and thus be the future vehicle of God's 'mighty' deeds transforming history.[46]

What is the nature of this new community which reflects the transformed existence of Christian discipleship?

We have seen already that the Church is to be guided by the principle of self-giving love. The new community of Christian disciples must therefore be a community which is committed to bringing about good in the world without concern for its own continued existence. (We will discuss below the possibilities of this type of church becoming a sect.) Certainly to be such a self-giving community the members would have to be disciplined Christians. Such a disciplined life would not be one in which the community would isolate itself, as in Qumran or some modern monastic orders. Rather, this life would be one lived in the midst of the world's joys, suffering, pain, and confusion. As Kaufman has pointed out, the movements of the world are not to be disparaged, but when they are vehicles for achieving God's reconciliation in the world we should participate in them, emphasizing the positive activities in which they are engaged. And for Bonhoeffer the suffering we might endure is only a mark attesting to the authenticity of our existence as disciples.

For the Church the implications of a disciplined life lived by its members in the midst of our chaotic world are numerous. It would seem to require more faithful teaching of the Christian gospel and tradition,

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[46]Ibid., pp. 480-481.

greater support by members of one another through small, intimate sharing groups, and the expectation of members that their vows be taken seriously and become priority items in the shaping of the commitments each might make in the world. Along with this, there would have to be a greater awareness of the true ministry the Church seems called on to perform-- the ministry of reconciliation--and how the actual activities of the Church in this area might take shape.

For the Church the model for its ministering activity in the world is the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Several features of Jesus' ministry are significant for our concern. His inclusion of all persons in the Kingdom (as seen in the parable of the labourers of the vineyard, and in his activity of associating with sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes) is one aspect. Another is his giving prominence to the spirit of the law as opposed to the letter--and for us the instances when this applied to ecclesiastical law are especially significant. The Church is to include all those who would seek to know God's love, and not to use human-originated traditions to keep some from participating in the fellowship of the Spirit which the Church should be.

The most significant feature of Jesus' ministry can be seen in the degree of his commitment. Jesus went to the cross in response to God's will for his life. That the Church must be ready to bear the suffering of that cross is perhaps the most difficult requirement of being a member of the Church which seeks to follow Christ's example. It is as Bonhoeffer said, when Jesus calls he bids us "come and die". In our world the Church is called on to endure many forms of suffering: to align itself with

unpopular causes aimed at increasing the amount of human freedom in the world, to give time and money to alleviate the poverty and pain which exists all around us, and in some cases individual Christians may even give their lives in order that God's reconciling activity might be carried out in the world.

Discipleship as a pattern for the Church's life today would call for a radical re-examination of our priorities, of how the Church conducts itself as an agent of God's reconciliation. Such a re-examination might also mean a dying of congregational patterns which have lost their meaning or purpose. Christ's call to discipleship is to follow his example in bringing in the Kingdom of God more fully in this world. The Kingdom can be more fully realized only when the Church becomes the self-giving and disciplined new community whose primary task is to transform existence so that it becomes more fully what God intends.

The Church has to renew the strengths of its Christian heritage, to truly become a fellowship of committed disciples following Christ's example. The Church must become involved in the world today as intimately and boldly as Jesus was in the world of his time. It must encounter the existing power structures, including religious ones, and where the Church's activity does not further the work of reconciliation, it must confront them to the end that they, too, become agencies of reconciliation in the world. With individuals, the Church must find ways to reaffirm the sanctity of human life (of all life) so that the new community which in truth the Church is can be fully realized.

2. The Church as new community or sect?

One objection which might be raised concerning the understanding I have been developing of the Church as a community of disciples is that it might lead to a "sect-type" of Christianity, and if this were to result would lead to estrangement from the mainstream of Christian tradition as seen in the unfolding of the Church throughout history. It seems an acceptable position to suggest that some of the traditional sect-type characteristics apply to this understanding of the Church as new community. However, there are obviously certain characteristics of the sect-type which any authentic expression of the Church must have to be a true expression of the Church of Jesus Christ.

a. **Church/Sect distinctions.** In his book, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, H. Richard Niebuhr describes what he sees as the weaknesses of denominationalism (the American church-type) as opposed to the sect. Niebuhr says:

> The evil of denominationalism lies in the conditions which makes the rise of sects desirable and necessary: in the failure of the churches to transcend the social conditions which fashion them into caste-organizations, to sublimate their loyalties to standards and institutions only remotely relevant if not contrary to the Christian ideal, to resist the temptation of making their own self-preservation and extension the primary object of their endeavor.[47]

He goes on to call for a Church based on fellowship in love. Niebuhr says that this church need not be a sect, for "it has always existed as a church within the churches."[48] He sees this church throughout history--

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[47]H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Holt, 1929), p. 21.

[48]Ibid., p. 282.

in the primitive church in Jerusalem, the Franciscan movement in the Catholic Church, in the Society of Friends.

> The increase of that fellowship today is the hope of Christendom and of the world. It is the church which can save the churches from the ruin of their secularism and consequent division. It challenges the world to recall its better nature and to find unity and peace in the knowledge of the divine love upon which all stable and just social life must be built.[49]

Niebuhr's suggestion that the Church go beyond church/sect distinctions coincides with the conclusion of Ernst Troeltsch in his analysis of the sociological typologies of "church" and "sect". While Troeltsch does outline the differences in what he sees as two different sociological types, he points to the fact that both types reflect portions of the Gospel's understanding of Christian life.

> Thus, in reality we are faced with two different sociological types. If objections are raised to the terms 'church' and 'sect', and if all sociological groups which are based on and inspired by monotheistic, universalized, religious motives are described...as 'Churches', we would then have to make the distinction between institutional churches and voluntary churches. It does not really matter which expression is used. The all-important point is this: that both types are a logical result of the Gospel, and only conjointly do they exhaust the whole range of its sociological influence, and thus indirectly of its social results, which are always connected with the religious organization.[50]

b. The ongoing Christian community. It is important that a perspective based on an understanding of discipleship be a part of the ongoing life of the institutional churches, and because of this those who make a commitment to living life as a disciple of Jesus must do so within the framework of the church as institution. There seems no other way for the

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[49]Ibid., pp. 283-284.

[50]Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 340-341.

institutional church to enter into responsible activity which would not imply too great a threat to a majority of its members. There are examples of extra-church structures which can continue to call the churches to account for their actions, or lack of action, in society. But to move the institution from accountability to involvement will require the perseverance of committed groups within these traditional structures.

Peter Berger points to the emergence of such groups. He says that the theological enterprise will always seek to find expression in living communities, and suggests that these communities may vary in nature. Berger says:

> Some of them may well emerge within the traditional religious group-
> ings and institutions, as new variants of the classical type of the
> *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (the 'little church within the Church', as a
> more intimate grouping within the larger community). There are al-
> ready indications of this possibility in a variety of groups that
> (probably misleadingly) have been subsumed under the phrase 'under-
> ground Churches'.[51]

Berger says that such groups may emerge outside the boundaries of religious institutions, but these groups would most likely have little contact with the Christian tradition as embodied in the ongoing institutional life of the churches. It is this connection to Christian tradition which points us to another reason for seeing as advantageous the formation of such small intimate groups within the larger community of the Church. The commitment to discipleship should not cause one to turn away from Christian tradition. That commitment would seem to demand a greater awareness of the tradition and how it may truly inform authentic Christian existence for this time and place.

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[51]Peter Berger, *A Rumor of Angels* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 108-109.

H. Richard Niebuhr suggests that we only know the truth of Christ's life by our participation in the ongoing Christian community. Niebuhr says:

> We do not confront an isolated Christ known to us apart from a company of witnesses who surround him, point to him, interpret this and that feature of his presence, explain to us the meaning of his words, direct our attention to his relations with the Father and the Spirit. Without direct confrontation there is no truth for me in all such testimony but without companion, collaborators, teachers, corroborating witnesses, I am at the mercy of my imagination.[52]

I am not suggesting that the Church as new community must take shape outside traditional religious institutions, but rather, in Niebuhr's phrase, "the fellowship of love" which this Church must truly be is the goal of any institutional expression of the Church's life. This goal may be unattainable, but the Church must continue to make the effort.

D. CHURCH SOCIAL ACTION IN THE CONTEMPORARY AGE

The next step is to examine how such a community of disciples can emerge within institutional church structures. In assessing this possibility, I want to focus on the Church's involvement in the world, on the Church engaged in social action.

Because it exists as a community of disciples the Church's sole agenda does not become social action. Yet the being in Christ which has been characterized as existing as a disciple results from a true response to the call of discipleship, and such a response implies practical obedience, or for the purpose of this work, practical involvement in the world. Such a call also means being for others, as Jesus was. Certainly the Church must continue to be the setting for community worship and celebration (i.e., administering the Sacraments and preaching the Word),

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[52]H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p. 245.

and of education designed to enrich and enliven such practice; but it is imperative that one of the vital marks of mature Christian existence and of the Church wherein that existence occurs must be the giving of oneself for others in need. That this commitment must be individual is understood, but the Church can and must provide opportunities for such commitment to be realized. Such opportunities must in part take form as Church social action.

I have attempted to develop an understanding of the Church based on an understanding of a community committed to discipleship. The world in which such a church exists also contributes to the definition of the being in the world which is to characterize the Church. And for the Church, today's world presents a complex and rapidly-changing scene in which to be involved. Certainly for the Church a renewed agenda is required to maintain an authentic existence as the ongoing witness to God's reconciling activity in the world.

Robert Hudnut characterizes the Church as a "sleeping giant". He presents a very strong case for Church-based social action. Hudnut says:

> social action is without question the name of the game for the church in the seventies. Without dramatic evidence that the church cares, the church as we know it simply is not going to make it out of the decade.[53]

Hudnut seems to present too strong a case, for obviously the Church as we know it has survived through half of the current decade, and although there are many trouble signs within institutional churches it

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[53]Robert K. Hudnut, *The Sleeping Giant* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 46.

appears likely that they will continue throughout the seventies at least. The question may be whether the Church as we have known it in its institutional form is really what Hudnut is calling for when he speaks of a church in the world caring for that world.

I have previously disagreed with the proposition that social action should be the only mark of the Church, for no expression of the Church can truly exist as an authentic example of the Gospel witness unless it administers the Sacraments, proclaims the Good News, and through education seeks to increase understanding of the Christian faith. Hudnut's viewpoint is a helpful one, however, for he does point dramatically to the need for the Church to demonstrate in the world that it indeed cares for the world.

Arnold Come sees the reconciling work of God as "a historical process, using the ministry of a historical community."[54] The Church as that community is called to a ministry in this historical setting, and this ministry requires a creative response to an increasingly complex world. The massive problems of world hunger, continuing warfare in many parts of the world, racial and economic injustice, and a multitude of other societal aberrations confront the modern-day Church with the challenge to exhibit the reconciling presence of Jesus Christ in innovative and effective ways.

Earlier in this work I quoted Gordon Kaufman describing the proper activity of the Church in the world. He stated the following requirement for such activity:

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[54]Come, p. 142.

> She must continuously experiment with novel forms of ministry and service which can bring God's reconciling love and power into newly emerging patterns of life and institutional structures, as well as into hitherto untouched concerns of society and culture.[55]

The "novel forms of ministry and service" which Kaufman sees as necessary to implement a ministry of reconciliation in today's world point to a need for effective models for social action by the Church (taking shape primarily in the activity of local churches and agencies of larger institutional bodies on local levels).

I will define social action as "a process of deliberate group effort to alter community or societal structures for the common good."[56] The understanding of this in terms of Church social action locates such groups within the basic institutional framework of the Church as we know it. The common good sought would be defined as the achievement of full humanity of all persons as a fulfillment of the promise implicit in the historical presence of Jesus Christ as God's completing of the creative process.

The implementation of such social action by the Church is the concern to which I now turn. In the following chapter I will describe the general context within which the Church exists, specifically noting the institutional character as it relates to social action as it has been evidenced within the Church itself. That such action is possible within the institutional churches of today is something which must be shown, and then I hope to outline the ways in which such social action may most effectively be carried out.

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[55]Kaufman, p. 495.

[56]Diefer T. Hessel, A *Social Action Primer* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 29.

By the preceding, I have attempted to establish a theological basis for the involvement of the Church in the world and have pointed to social action as an appropriate means for the expression of that involvement. That the Church must be for others does seem an imperative in this world—for the optimistic characterizing of this as a "world come of age" (using Bonhoeffer's phrase) seems today more a hope to be fully realized than an occurrence that can be seen as genuinely evident.

My contention is that the Church as a community of disciples, as a Church constantly being confronted and renewed by the call to discipleship, can be an effective force in the reconciliation of this world to God's plan of full creation. The next step is to outline the manner in which such a hope can be realized in this historical moment.

CHAPTER II

ILLUSTRATIVE MODELS FOR SOCIAL ACTION ON THE LOCAL CHURCH LEVEL

In the preceding chapter I sought to establish an understanding

of discipleship and the Church which leads to an affirmative stance on

Church social action. Defining social action in terms of group effort

towards the common good by action engaging societal structures, and seek-

ing to cast this definition in terms of Church social action, I now want

to examine the most viable forms for this social action within the struc-

tural framework of the institutional church (paying special attention to

the local church level).

Before outlining in specific terms what possible models exist, I

want to acknowledge that the general climate within most major Protestant

denominations has not been supportive of direct social action strategies

in recent years. In several instances there have been dramatic pullbacks

from such societal engagement. Harold Quinley, in an article entitled

"The Dilemma of an Activist Church", supports this position in the follow-

ing manner:

> all of the major Protestant denominations have recently carried out
> major policy and structural reforms. The net result of these changes,
> at present, has been to reduce the number of clergymen serving in
> denominational staff positions, special ministries and campus minis-
> tries; to reorder priorities and to withdraw from certain areas of
> social action; and to place greater authority in the hands of laymen
> and generally conservative elements within the churches.[1]

The policy and structural reforms which Quinley refers to are in part due

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[1]Harold Quinley, "The Dilemma of an Activist Church," *Journal
for the Scientific Study of Religion*, XIII:1 (March 1974) p. 16.

to a decreasing availability of financial resources for such denominational

and special programs. The institutional churches, however, have in fact

cut programs which have the most visible impact on society in favor of

those programs more directed at maintaining institutional structures in

their basic forms. Quinley cites lay opposition to direct action as the

reason most churches are unable to engage in viable social action ministries,

especially those dealing with controversial issues. He sees this outcome:

> For liberal churches to turn their backs on social causes...would in
> itself cause serious difficulties to liberal Protestantism.[2]

This would result in a loss of faith in the churches by more liberal lay-

persons, and would undercut the churches' position in society as a pro-

phetic voice for upholding human values.

Therefore, the challenge for the Church through its various

institutional expressions becomes one of developing social action strate-

gies based on models which respond to the needs of the world.

Jeffrey Hadden and Charles Longino assess the position of the

liberal churches in regard to social action in these terms:

> During the 1960's liberal church leaders marched gallantly but hap-
> hazardly into the political arena. They got caught in a lot of cross-
> fire. For the most part, they have since retreated. Many, like
> Kelley (Dean Kelley, National Council of Churches executive in the
> area of social action) now believe the move was ill-conceived or
> inappropriate from the beginning. This we cannot affirm. But to
> return and be effective in the ongoing struggle for human justice,
> the churches must learn from their experiences of the 60's.[3]

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[2] Ibid., p. 19.

[3] Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles E. Longino, *Gideon's Gang*
(Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974), p. 233.

Hadden and Longino see the churches challenged to quicken the consciences of their own memberships in order that social action can be more fully understood and accepted as a part of the authentic ministering activity of the Church. I will say more about their conclusions later when examining their case study of two social action congregations.

The assumption I begin with in looking at models for social action on the local church level is that such social action is a necessary and authentic sign of the Church as it takes shape in contemporary institutional organization. In the 60's Church social action often took the form of clergy and some lay involvement in marches or other activist expressions which were essentially carried out in settings removed from the ongoing life of local churches. The argument may be advanced that it is easier to be involved in international or national issues than in those too close to home. Yet Church social action which directly involves persons in issues they can readily identify as their concern seems one necessary ingredient of the models I want to examine. There are ways to involve persons in concerns which are other than local, and various models will be described which have done this, but direct involvement in a meaningful way is essential.

As has been previously stated, the models we are most concerned with are those which can be implemented on the local church level. Because of this specific interest I will begin by looking at two models which reflect this local character--models which I will describe as task forces operating within local church settings.

A. TASK FORCE MODELS FOR DOING SOCIAL ACTION

1. Peace Operations Center, All Saints Episcopal

a. Evolution of the project. One model which presents an example
of a locally initiated social action project is the Peace Operations Center
of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California. All Saints is a
parish with 4,000 baptized members representing the largest Episcopal con-
gregation in the West. It is a membership with mostly middle income and
upper income persons, with several influential and wealthy persons among
its key members. Politically, the congregation appears to have a conser-
vative character on the whole, although it has supported many liberal
stands taken by its rector and other clergy on social issues, and has at
times taken a liberal stance on an issue as a congregation.

The Peace Operation Center was a clergy-conceived proposal for
involving All Saints in the ongoing protest against the Vietnam War. A
personal interview with Dr. Regas forms part of the basis for the descrip-
tion of the Peace Operations Center contained in this work. The interview
provided some additional information on Dr. Regas' general philosophy for
doing social action on the local church level, and this will be included
to help support some conclusions I have reached concerning this particular
social action model. Some of the basic questions asked during the inter-
view were directed at determining how the project originated, and at
arriving at an assessment of the over-all congregational response to the
project, specifically as to forms of congregational support and involve-
ment and any opposition which may have been voiced.

The Peace Operations Center came into being in 1971, and emerged from a challenge issued by the rector, Dr. Regas, to the All Saints congregation and their subsequent response. The means for communicating the challenge was a sermon preached by Dr. Regas on March 7, 1971, which had been billed as an important statement on the war. Although the vestry (the ruling body of the congregation) of All Saints was aware of this as an important statement they were not aware of the details of the proposal for establishing the Peace Operations Center as part of the ongoing structure of congregational life at All Saints. The vestry had been asked to serve as discussion leaders in a forum period following the sermon. Dr. Regas has acknowledged that by not informing them more fully as to the nature of his proposal, he made their leadership task more difficult. As a result the forum was less productive than it might have been.

The proposal to establish the Peace Operations Center asked that the All Saints congregation commit both money to fund this project and office space to house its day-to-day activities. An assistant minister on the All Saints staff, William Rankin, was to oversee the formation of the Peace Operations Center and assist in its early development. The basic proposal was implemented, and although the congregation did not officially endorse or fund its ongoing operation, the Center was housed in the church. There was significant congregational opposition which was to continue throughout the year 1971.

The first open opposition to the rector's proposal came in a letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* from a multimillionaire aerospace executive who was a member of the All Saints congregation.

In response to the *Times* article on the Regas' sermon and the establishing of the actual operation of the Peace Operations Center, this parishioner wrote defending the United States position on the Vietnam War, and criticizing the rector. This letter signaled the emergence of an opposition group, "The Committee to Save All Saints". This group actively opposed the ongoing existence of the Peace Operations Center and ultimately asked the rector to abandon his support of the project, or to resign. This occurred in an open meeting attended by 300 persons. Although several members left the congregation, and this opposition continued, Dr. Regas managed to maintain support for his position.

In the fall, the opposition committee asked members to withhold pledges as a means of protesting the rector's position. In effect, the financial campaign for the coming year became a referendum on Dr. Regas leadership. The result was an increase of nearly $20,000 over the previous year's pledges. In a sense this represented a victory for the program initiated to involve the congregation more directly in opposition to the war. Dr. Regas saw the result as indicating "it is possible to attempt a faithful discipleship and still survive as a viable parish.[4]

The Peace Operations Center continued in existence until the Paris accords were signed in early 1973. At the height of its operation, *PAX*, the Center's newsletter, had a nationwide circulation of 1,400. Its Sunday evening programs drew an average of 150-200 persons a week. Dr. Regas describes the basic operation in this way:

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[4]George Regas, "The Church and the Moral Issue of War" (Rel. D. dissertation, School of Theology at Claremont, 1972) p. 165.

The POC has a full-time coordinator, a large office in All Saints Church which is open from 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., five days a week, and holds regular meetings every Sunday evening from 7:30-10:00 p.m. in the Parish House. The POC's efforts fall into two basic areas, education and direct action. Various task forces have been designed to initiate and implement programs.[5]

During the interview I conducted with Dr. Regas, he reflected on the Peace Operations Center phase of All Saints' history. He said that he now believes that it was a mistake not to include the vestry of All Saints in the initial planning of the P.O.C. proposal, and that lay participation in creating programs is crucial. He also stressed that this should be undergirded by theological and biblical understandings.

b. Regas' outline for social action. Dr. Regas outlined a four-step understanding of congregational involvement in social action. This four-step approach includes the following: a prophetic challenge which issues from a proclamation of the Gospel message stressing ministry to the oppressed; an educational process designed to familiarize the congregation with specific problems which they need to address; a response mechanism which provides a means whereby those persons who are motivated to become directly involved in problem-solving can do so; and feedback which serves as a time for theological reflection and celebration. In addition, Dr. Regas stressed that worship should play an important role in a church's social action ministry. By incorporating social issues into the body of the worship experience a sense of worship as more than a private experience can emerge. Worship ceases to be privatistic, and becomes the setting for a fusion of corporate and personal healing.

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[5]Ibid., p. 167.

Regarding ongoing social action, Dr. Regas emphasized that to be
effective a church must be more than a one-cause church. This seems par-
ticularly important in larger congregations where persons may possess a
variety of interests and talents which could be utilized in various ways
within the life of a community. All Saints reflects this diversity in
programs such as a store-front "outpost" operation which ministers to
the indigent population in Pasadena, its support of the farm worker or-
ganizing campaign, and in its involvement with the elderly segment of
Pasadena's population.

In analyzing the effectiveness of All Saints as a model
for a congregationally-based task force approach to social action, par-
ticulary in respect to the Peace Operations Center project, some valuable
lessons can be learned. First, it is possible for one congregation to
become significantly involved in a national issue by use of media and
through developing an organizational style which incorporates persons
from a regional area (the Peace Operations Center became the main coordi-
nating agency for opposition to the war in Southern California). Secondly,
a stand taken on a controversial issue can be a source of controversy
within a local church, but such an issue does not have to shatter the
congregation's basic structure, or significantly damage its financial
base. Finally, the Peace Operations Center project of All Saints suggests
that the task force operating within a congregational setting can be one
effective model for accomplishing meaningful social action within the
institutional church structure.

2. Project Understanding, Temple City Christian Church

       a. Project design. Another task force model operating within a local church can be seen in the group developed in Temple City Christian Church as a part of Project Understanding.

       Project Understanding is a project which was initiated at the School of Theology at Claremont under the leadership of Drs. Joseph Hough and Dan Rhoades. The project design included assigning interns to work with suburban white congregations to develop strategies to combat white racism. Two of the purposes of the Project that relate especially to my interest are the attempts to:

> throw some light on the methods of training for social change that might be broadly applicable to laity and clergy of local churches

and,

> to develop a continuing institutional commitment to social change ministry.[6]

This second purpose was related to an assumption by the Project staff that the issue of social action is one of the most divisive factors in contemporary local churches.

       According to the report prepared by Drs. Hough and Rhoades, several problems emerged after the first year of the experiment. A lack of clarity about the goals of Project Understanding, and the role of the intern in relationship to the local congregations were two of these problems.

       As with most of the Project Understanding experiments the Temple

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[6]Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and Daniel D. Rhoades, *Project Understanding: Report and Evaluation* (School of Theology at Claremont, 1971), p. 3.

City project evolved into an ecumenical venture. Several advantages to

such ecumenical clustering are listed in the report. These include:

1. Mutual support between the congregations.
2. Cooperative spin-off which resulted in development of new ecumenical possibilities.
3. Greater freedom for the Project's staff operating with an ecumenical steering committee.
4. Greater community involvement through the connections available in the various churches.
5. Development of greater 'joint mission consciousness'
6. Greater coordination and effectiveness in social action efforts on the part of community churches.[7]

b. Temple City setting. While the Project did become based in an

ecumenical cluster, it is useful in the context of this work for me to focus

on the effects of involvement on the congregation of Temple City Christian

Church. The following description is derived from an interview with Rev.

Edwin Linberg, minister of that congregation.

The initial involvement in Project Understanding by the Temple

City congregation created a conflict situation. While the immediate issue

did not precipitate the conflict, it was the catalyst which resulted in a

small group of liberal members who had been seeking changes within the con-

gregation supporting the project but also withdrawing from the mainstream

of the church's life.

The form taken by the Project Understanding group in Temple City

was a fair housing organization. While achieving successes in this area,

the result for the Temple City congregation was a further polarization

and an isolation of the liberal group involved in the Project. It should

be noted that this group was in some senses a distinct group within the

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[7]Ibid., p. 4.

congregation prior to Project Understanding. They had been the mainstays of a Sunday evening contemporary worship service which was in its second year, and the minister described the group as being "out of the mainstream" of congregational life. Eventually, this group left the congregation—some moving out of the area, others into a cooperative living arrangement. Rev. Linberg characterized this latter group as functioning as a house-church.

With the withdrawal of this more liberal group from the congregation, sentiment developed against Project Understanding remaining as part of the congregational framework. Rev. Linberg describes the congregation as moving from a social action orientation to a style which is more social service and low-risk action (day-care, a counseling center, and a task-force dealing with local issues).

Several conclusions emerge from my interview with Rev. Linberg. Among such conclusions are these:

1) Although the congregation lost its liberal element, the minister feels free to be an advocate for social change.

2) The congregation has paid more attention to its nurturing function.

3) The retreat from a direct social action stance on the part of the congregation has been because of the loss of leadership (as represented by the liberal group).

4) The congregation has emerged as a stronger community (financially the congregation is very strong), and while there is no direct social action being accomplished, there is no increased antagonism toward social action in general.

The Temple City experiment does illustrate the potential for social action being a disruptive factor in the life of a congregation, especially where some prior tendency to fragment has been apparent. If a congregation is to be the base for a social action project like Project Understanding, it is important that the congregation be a part of the decision-making process from the beginning. Ownership must be developed by the congregation, or the potential support for any direct social action will be greatly diminished.

B. CHURCH AGENCY MODELS FOR DOING SOCIAL ACTION

Another model for facilitating social action on the local church level is the church agency. I want to examine two distinct examples of this model to point out some of the possible advantages and disadvantages in the agency approach to initiating local church social action. The two agencies are METRO, a department of the San Diego District United Methodist Union, and the National Farm Worker Ministry, an agency partially funded by the National Council of Churches whose ministry is directed at supporting the organizing efforts of migrant and seasonal farm workers.

1. METRO

a. Purpose. METRO is located in the San Diego metropolitan area, and has as its coordinator, Dr. Richard Shanor. The agency has been in existence since 1966. The purpose of METRO is given in this statement:

> METRO is a policy-studying, approving and implementing body. It is the intended organizational structure through which there can be a regionally-applied United Methodist ministry in the metropolitan area. It is not a 'super parish', but it is an extension of the established congregations in the larger San Diego region.

METRO seeks to bring about personal involvement of qualified, inter-
ested, and METRO-trained volunteers from all sectors of the metropolis
into intensive mission.[8]

METRO was conceived as a means for involving the United Methodists

of San Diego in new types of Christian service to bring about meaningful

social change. In a paper entitled, "A Concept for Action Through METRO",

five basic principles for the METRO program are articulated. These five

principles are:

1) The principle of mission.
2) The principle of inclusiveness.
3) The principle of involvement.
4) The principle of mutuality.
5) The principle of renewal.[9]

In summarizing these principles this statement is made:

the concept is not to create a new institution to provide specialized
ministry in a certain place, or for a particular need, although this
may and should be a part of the outcome. The purpose, rather, is to
involve and release the latent energies of the Methodists of San Diego
in relation to the needs of contemporary metropolitan life, in all
its aspects.[10]

b. Description of programs. The stated purpose of METRO is not

to create any new institutional structures for accomplishing a variety of

ministries, but to mobilize lay persons for meeting needs of the commun-

ity of metropolitan San Diego. METRO serves primarily to enable groups of

people to be in ministry to meet a specified need, and local churches

often are the resource from which such people are drawn. Some of the

programs sponsored or coordinated by METRO are: the Good Neighbor Center,

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[8]"METRO Department's Relationship to the San Diego District Union
of the United Methodist Church and Organization of the Department",
(July 1, 1969), p. 1.

[9]Ralph Kofoed, "A Concept for Action Through METRO" (May 6, 1966),
pp. 1-2.

[10]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

which provides emergency help to people in terms of food, clothing, transportation, counseling, and referral services; two resident houses for ex-offenders: Men's Resident House, and Nuestra Casa, for women ex-offenders; a summer ministries program which provides children and older youth with camping and recreational opportunities; and through seven counseling centers, METRO provides a variety of services in the area of counseling.

In an interview with Dr. Richard Shanor, METRO coordinator, in April, 1974, I focused on several key issues in METRO's effectiveness in mobilizing local church involvement in various METRO programs. Dr. Shanor stated that METRO relates as closely as possible to every local United Methodist church in the San Diego metropolitan area, and that in some way each church is connected to at least one of the METRO programs. At the time of the interview an effort was being made to have more local churches write METRO support into their budgets. (Most churches take special offerings, but few have METRO in their budget). Related to local church support is the issue of the "image" of METRO. The public relations-consciousness of this ministry seems to function on a highly-sophisticated level. Dr. Shanor sees this as necessary in relating to local churches, and because of this in dealing with controversial issues the METRO strategy is to see that the "job is done", the appropriate response made, rather than to be out in front on an issue. This low profile approach includes getting at decision-makers in any given situation, and seeking to use influence to achieve the hoped-for response.

c. Local church support. Throughout the interview METRO's role
in the San Diego metropolitan area was compared to that of the Glide Founda-
tion in San Francisco (in response to a question put by the writer). While
Glide has the advantage of a large endowment, Shanor sees the possibility
that this may have undercut Glide's possible relationship to local churches
within the greater San Francisco area. METRO's low-key involvement in the
community contrasts markedly with Glide's flamboyance in a variety of con-
troversial issues in the Bay Area. (i.e., prostitutes rights and human
sexuality, prison reform, and the Angela Davis trial). Shanor expressed
the conviction that local churches would respond more favorably to the
mission-orientation model of METRO, and that this basic style supplemented
by training lay persons could result in a more effective ministry of
action for social change.

While Dr. Shanor stressed the importance of local church support,
he did admit that program priorities emerge from staff and Board recommen-
dations, and that once a new project is defined then volunteers are re-
cruited. The top priority projects receive a greater amount of staff
participation. METRO has 30 employees involved in its top priority pro-
grams (25% of the total program). Community involvement is developed
through an advisory board structure, but volunteer involvement is not
the key to accomplishing several of the more significant METRO programs.
In addition, a decision to fund programs through government and foundation
grants means that while METRO relies in part on local church financial
support, such support is not essential. In fact, the majority of the
church support that METRO does receive comes from either regional or
national levels.

These two points support one criticism I have of the METRO model,
and that is that an agency such as METRO will employ staff to accomplish
a social action ministry and this will often preclude an emphasis on re-
cruiting and training lay persons to be engaged in direct social action.
Because of this, local churches can become spectators to the social action
ministry carried on by an agency, and while their good will is required
for the maintenance of the ongoing program, the experience of being a
"church in mission" is one that bypasses the local church.

METRO provides one model of a church agency which can accomplish
a significant social action ministry, but it does not transcend its agency
boundaries and effectively train large numbers of laypersons in local
churches to be involved in social action. It is possible that an agency
hoping to facilitate direct social action projects could be the supportive
structure for task forces within local churches. An agency which seems to
present this possibility is the National Farm Worker Ministry. I next
will describe this agency's ministry and the possibility of relating to
local churches which it suggests.

2. National Farm Worker Ministry

a. Relationship to the institutional church. The National Farm
Worker Ministry is an agency which evolved out of the California Migrant
Ministry and several other migrant ministries from various states. These
ministries sought to serve migrant and seasonal farm workers through
charitable and organizational efforts. The National Farm Worker Ministry
seeks to move the support of churches and church groups into a more open

advocacy position. This position sees the Church called into ministry with the oppressed, and that the agenda for such a ministry should be determined by the people most directly involved, in this case by farm workers. As a means for carrying out this ministry the N.F.W.M. has sought to create church support through a variety of strategies and programs. Among these are denominational support through funding and by resolution, through organizing direct involvement by clergy and lay people to support farm workers through direct aid, education, and on some occasions as part of demonstrations or other forms of protest. In relating to local churches the National Farm Worker Ministry has sought to create farm worker support groups which can operate as task forces within congregations, as well as involving lay and clergy persons in various support activities within communities and metropolitan areas. The basic goal of the ministry activities of the N.F.W.M. is to move the Church in its various institutional forms into a position whereby it can effectively support the organizing efforts of farm workers mostly in conjunction with the labor union, the United Farm Workers.

b. The agency as task force. Through the struggle with the farm workers an understanding of how churches may become agents of social change has emerged. Rev. Chris Hartmire, the director of the N.F.W.M., states this in these words:

> The best mission education takes place in the context of crises and that changing structures can set men free from old patterns of thought and old economic forces to think new thoughts and dare new deeds for the sake of their fellow men.[11]

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[11]Wayne C. Hartmire, *The Church and the Emerging Farm Workers Movement*, (July, 1967), p. 38.

This understanding has led to efforts to involve persons directly in Christian social action and to the strategy that the N.F.W.M. act as "an experimental task-force out in front of the Church on the issue of farm labor and deeply rooted in the farm worker community."[12] How such a task force can operate within institutional church structures is an important point, one which I will now explore.

Rev. Hartmire quotes from an article by Dan Dodson, "To Work Effectively as Agents of Change", in the February, 1965, issue of *Social Action*, in describing the importance of the task force approach:

> Significant social change...most often comes because a little Gideon's dozen operating from deep commitment, managed to maneuver the larger groups into significant confrontations.13

Through such a task force the institution can be engaged in social action which can support those most in need in our society.

Rev. Hartmire attaches significance to the involvement of the institutional church in movements seeking social change, which he expresses in these words:

> It can make a contribution that a detached ad hoc Christian group cannot make....An established institution such as the Church also has lines to influential people in decision-making positions who can add their weight to the struggle. And an institutional support program has more dependability than most forms of support.14

An institutionally-based task force can operate to carry out church social action, interpreting the social issues of a particular situation to the larger church structures, but being free enough to enter into direct

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[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., p. 33.

[14]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

involvement on social issues which could be controversial. The local

church support group can also have the effect of a task force within the

N.F.W.M. structure. In several congregations within the Southern

California-Arizona Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church such

support groups have operated. The basic strategy, however, has been to

engage staff more directly in doing social action themselves rather than

training others. Such staff operate independently of task forces but

despite this possible weakness in the N.F.W.M. model, I do see the task

force related to an institutional structure as a model having potential

for more significant involvement by lay persons. The agency setting for

such a task force must be structured to insure adequate resources for

training and support of groups operating within local churches.

C. CONGREGATIONAL MODELS FOR DOING SOCIAL ACTION

1. Congregation for reconciliation

a. Description of two experiments. An alternative to the models

of task forces within local churches, or church agencies whose staff be-

come the principal agents for social change, is to create congregations

with the basic purpose of being involved in promoting social change while

acting within the boundaries of institutional church structures.

In *Gideon's Gang*, Jeffrey Hadden and Charles F. Longino describe

the formation of two such congregations in separate presbyteries of the

United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as "congregations for reconciliation".

The Miami and Cincinnati Presbyteries moved in 1968 to implement guide-

lines and recommendations of the Board of National Missions concerning

creation of experimental congregations. In a pamphlet entitled

"Strategies for the Development of New Congregations" this board proposed
the testing of the thesis that

> the congregation can be an 'effective organizational form for the
> ministry of the church in the face of tremendous social change.'
> It encouraged the development of experimental missions of a goal-
> oriented, flexible, and ecumenical nature, and oriented toward inter-
> est and involvement.[15]

In response to these guidelines two congregations were formed in separate
locations and they took very different courses in acting out their roles
as congregations committed to social change.

Hadden and Longino in their case study focused most of their
attention on the Dayton Congregation for Reconciliation. Their analysis
of the congregational style of the Dayton congregation reveals some
successes, but also they point to several mistakes or errors in judgment
in that congregation's attempt to realize the goal of creating an effec-
tive social action ministry from a congregational base. While the
Gideon's Gang of the title refers to the Dayton group led by their pastor,
Rev. Richard Righter, the congregation which developed in Cincinnati is
also a significant model in terms of doing social action within an insti-
tutional church setting. First, however, I want to briefly look at the
Dayton experiment as these authors describe its development.

In 1968, the Miami Presbytery initiated the creation of the Con-
gregation of Reconciliation partly as a response to a need for ministry
to achieve racial understanding in the city of Dayton which had experienced
racial tension and civil unrest throughout 1967. A Presbytery committee
interviewed candidates and called Rev. Righter to recruit members and form

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[15]Hadden and Longino, p. 43.

the congregation. A great deal of publicity preceded the actual arrival of Rev. Righter, and because of this many persons who became a part of the congregation were those from outside the mainstream of institutional church life. In addition, Rev. Righter's own style was much more community-oriented, and he tended to address the presbytery and local churches from an advocacy position which often moved into conflict and confrontation. These factors seem significant in the actual development of the Dayton Congregation for Reconciliation.

The Dayton group became a very public social action group which used confrontation as a major strategy. At the same time, the actual congregation which emerged defined itself in terms very different than what the Miami Presbytery had envisioned. The Congregation for Reconciliation related only in surface ways to other Presbyterian congregations in the Dayton area. The reason for being of the Congregation defined it much more in terms of social action than as the Church called to be in the world. Because of this the public relations image of the Dayton group was a difficult problem for local presbytery officials. While Hadden and Longino praise this group for its committed life style, they suggest several ways in which they could have been more effective.

One area where better results might have been achieved was in recruiting members. The Presbytery failed to enlist adequate support from local pastors, and Rev. Righter did little to try to overcome this. Because of this less than 50% of the original members came from Presbyterian backgrounds. This initial failure compromised the goals of the experiment, and the Congregation for Reconciliation evolved in Dayton in a different form than originally intended.

In assessing the impact of the Dayton experimental congregation I should say that Hadden and Longino do document successful social action projects carried out by this group, and that they do point to several factors which suggest the maturing of the group as it is presently constituted (i.e., a Children's Church which has become the educational ministry of the congregation, and which uses the telling of Bible stories as a means for learning; a prayer group meeting on a regular basis; and the goal of recruiting new members to help the congregation continue). Since this is true, I see in the Cincinnati experiment a model which may be more useful for bringing the institutional church more directly into the social action arena.

The Cincinnati Presbytery called Rev. Duane Holm to lead its experimental congregation. His orientation was more towards developing a community of faith which would move into the world because of their understanding of the Gospel imperative, and by means of a shared insight achieved through corporate worship. This emphasis on developing the community first before becoming social action agents was significant for the form which the congregation was to take. Another important aspect of the Cincinnati Congregation for Reconciliation was its supportive relationship with Presbytery leadership and the positive role it played in raising the social consciousness of local Presbyterian congregations in the Cincinnati area. Corporate worship was the means for generating a sense of community, and also for supporting that community feeling in an ongoing fashion. The Biblical foundation of this community of faith became a significant factor in its social action style. Through a

monthly newsletter to the Cincinnati-area Presbyterian churches the Congregation for Reconciliation commented on a variety of social issues from a Biblical perspective. These interpretive statements made an important impact, especially on more conservative, Biblically-oriented congregations.

Two issues were important in the Cincinnati congregation's activity of interpreting and educating various congregations as to the deeper issues raised in social action considerations. These two issues were the churches' response to the Black Manifesto formulated by James Forman, and the reaction of local Presbyterians and their congregations to support of Angela Davis by the United Presbyterian Church in the form of legal assistance funding. Regarding both these issues the Congregation was able to make a contribution toward consciousness-raising for the local congregations through a series of action strategies and a proposal in response to the Black Manifesto that would provide:

a package of collateral loans for black business enterprises, coupled with the recommendation that churches deposit money and buy stock in new black-controlled financial institutions in Cincinnati.[16]

The manner in which the Cincinnati congregation related to the other local congregations reinforces the significance of this aspect of their social action ministry. For them "social action was not an end in itself. Equally important was the aim of helping churches to share in the process."[17]

As part of its Sunday morning schedule a church school was begun for the children of the congregation. The curriculum developed "centered on black-white encounters in the Bible."[18] After completing the

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[16]Ibid., p. 187.

[17]Ibid., p. 189.

[18]Hadden and Longino, op. cit., p. 189.

curriculum the Congregation decided to attempt to have this published for wider use. They rewrote the material to be used by evangelical congregations. The reasoning behind this was the conclusions that

> evangelical churches were probably least likely to emphasize the contributions of blacks to the Christian heritage. Since their lessons were based on Bible stories, they might well be most appreciated in these same churches. And so the material was rewritten with evangelicals in mind and turned into a vacation Bible school curriculum.[19]

The Cincinnati Congregation for Reconciliation was chartered for a determined period of time (four years), and at the end of that time the group disbanded. Hadden and Longino point out these aspects of the relative success of this experiment:

> The real value of the Cincinnati experiment will be determined in its death, in its legacy for Presbytery churches. Proving a thesis is insufficient inheritance. The value of an experiment is its usefulness to policy and planning.[20]

The Cincinnati Congregation for Reconciliation created a meaningful community. It developed a potentially useful curriculum. It brought before the Presbytery proposals for minority investments and representation which were adopted. But perhaps most significantly for my concern

> the Congregation proved to established churches that they could become meaningfully involved in social action without reaping internal dissension in the process.[21]

The lasting effect of this experiment in the Cincinnati Presbytery is still problematic. Ex-members, clergy, and Presbytery leaders are all part of the necessary social mechanism needed to continue the benefits of

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[19]Hadden and Longino, pp. 189-190.

[20]Ibid., p. 199

[21]Hadden and Longino, op. cit., p. 199.

the Congregation's social action. But the importance of the model does

seem to hold lasting significance for a ministry which would include

"educating, interpreting, planning, and executing designs for social

action."[22]

b. Significance of these experimental models. In both Dayton

and Cincinnati Congregations for Reconciliation there appear important

insights which can be useful for accomplishing social action on the local

church level. The Dayton experiment continues and may prove that a con-

gregation can grow from a radically-stated social action orientation into

an inclusive worshipping communi y. In its Gulf Boycott campaign (de-

signed to secure Gulf corporate responsibility in Angola) it has illus-

trated that a major national social issue can be dealt with by a local

congregation.

> The Congregation for Reconciliation, in fostering a social-action
> project aspiring to become a national movement, encountered consid-
> erable scoffing at such absurd self-aggrandizement. The thought of
> a small congregation taking on the fourth largest international
> petroleum group seemed patent fantasy. Yet as the movement has
> grown it has become conceivable that given certain circumstances the
> movement could actually succeed in its goal.[23]

The Cincinnati experiment proves the thesis that social action can be

accomplished within the institutional church structure, and that conser-

vative congregations can be given opportunities to respond in positive

ways to social issues without polarization resulting. Such polarization

was avoided in part by the low-key, non-confrontive style of the

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[22]Hadden and Longino, p. 201.

[23]Ibid., p. 124.

congregation. Of equal importance in the Cincinnati project was the role

of worship and a Biblically-based understanding for doing social action.

2. Other congregational models

In addition to the Congregation for Reconciliation experiments,

there are other local congregations which exhibit a commitment to direct

involvement in social action from a local church base. Among these are

the Kittamaqundi Community of Columbia, Maryland, and the Parish of the

Holy Covenant in Chicago.

a. Kittamaqundi Community. The Kittamaqundi Community emerged

from the Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C., as a highly disci-

plined non-denominational worshipping community functioning independently.

The membership requirements are very structured, and demand a high degree

of commitment in terms of study, witness, and financial giving.

Included in the "Covenant of Members" are these specific expectations:

1. celebration of worship...weekly
2. participation in witness and service in a mission group
3. praying and studying Scripture regularly
4. giving a tithe of...gross income[24]

Mission groups become the basic unit of organization in the community,

and are the setting for study, mutual support, and community involvement.

Significant characteristics of this model are the emphasis on a sound

Biblical and theological grounding, a high level of commitment expected

from each person, and an emphasis on worship which is planned on a

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[24]Kittamaqundi Community, "Who We Are--Our Identity".

community-wide basis. From this foundation emerges the understanding of the Christian life as one in which a person is called to be in service to others who are in need.

b. Parish of the Holy Covenant. This congregation is located in an urban setting (Chicago), and it also emphasizes the smaller parish/mission group unit as the base for both study and commitment in the larger community. This is also carried out in a highly disciplined manner, requiring adherence to certain standards similar to those found in the other congregations we have described.

I include these last examples in an effort to reinforce the thesis that social action is possible from a local church base, either in congregations building their membership on this basis, or through more or less autonomous task forces, or in cooperation with outside agencies. If effective church action is really to occur it must take place in such settings. I intend in the next chapter to suggest what seem the essential elements of the best models for doing social action on the local church level.

CHAPTER III

SUGGESTED MODELS FOR SOCIAL ACTION ON THE LOCAL CHURCH LEVEL

In the following chapter I hope to establish that the necessary

climate for supporting Church social action exists, and that models for

such social action can be suggested which will allow local church struc-

tures to be involved effectively in the world. More importantly, I want

to show that in some ways various institutional agencies of the Church

are already moving toward a more self-consciously articulated position

of doing social action from an institutional church base.

A. THE POSSIBILITY FOR CHURCH SOCIAL ACTION

Rev. Chris Hartmire, in describing the reasons for the Church

being a part of the farm workers' struggle, uses these words:

> There is no human community that has intercession for all men and
> confession and solidarity with our servant Lord built into its very
> existence, save the Church.
>
> There can be no Gospel proclamation and no leavening (of human
> movements) without a serious attempt to be servants after our ser-
> vant Lord. And where servanthood is practiced, the Word is made
> flesh and men are confronted in a way they cannot avoid.[1]

The Church must find effective means for being the servant people

of the Lord in our complex modern society. Models for doing social action

must be created and refined so that more lay persons can come to an under-

standing of being "in the world for Christ" as a requisite of the

Christian faith experience. Such models must have solid Biblical and

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[1]Wayne C. Hartmire, *The Church and the Emerging Farm Workers
Movement*, (July, 1967), pp. 39-40.

theological bases, and education as to the nature and scope of social issues must be a prelude to direct involvement in seeking solutions through social action. Is the institutional church capable of supporting such an understanding of ministry? Especially, can the basic unit of the institutional church structures, the local church, be the setting within which laypersons as well as clergy become social action agents seeking to create a more humane society for the benefit of all persons?

1. Climate for support in Church social action

While reviewing several models for social action in Chapter 2, it seems that their long-range usefulness depends greatly on the climate of support for social action within local churches. The 60's saw a variety of public social action efforts by various church groups, and most of these were controversial by nature of the issues they were related to. Because of the controversial nature of these social action forays, many churches became opposed to any social involvement on the part of the church, either by clergy or laity. Dean M. Kelley, in his book, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, describes the decline of the liberal church and states the hypothesis that its commitment to social change has been one of the primary reasons.

Kelley contends that the church as religious institution cannot be effective as an institutional agent for social change. Kelley charges that the mainline denominations are unable to inspire the necessary discipline or commitment from their members, nor can leaders make clear in what way social action "fits in with the meaning-system

of the church."[2] Instead, Kelley calls on the churches to act in a manner
which will "create a community of shared experience and meaning within
the churches."[3] A more disciplined personal faith should be fostered by
what Kelley calls "strictness", tougher rules for membership, more struc-
tured church life (study and devotion), and a clearer proclamation of
the doctrines of the faith.

In fairness to Kelley's analysis of the social action role the
Church might play, we must point out that he does suggest the possibility
of small committed groups (ecclesiola) functioning within congregations
or larger institutional structures. Kelley suggests that such groups
would, as a possible nucleus for social action, "want to be called to a
really serious discipleship...to determine what ultimate meanings they
are going to embrace and embody."[4] Kelley's emphasis is on creating
structures of meaning, and while he states that such meanings would be
"embodied" by a really committed small group, he seems to see most main-
line churches supporting the "embracing" of meanings more readily than
embodying them. Even in his scepticism Kelley does point to one possible
model for social action, the ecclesiola in ecclesia or small church group
within the larger church, a model which I have examined before in its
task force form.

2. Commitment and social action

Jeffrey Hadden and Charles Longino address themselves to Kelley's

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[2] Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, (New York:
Harper and Row, 1972), p. 146.

[3] Kelley, op. cit., p. 146.

[4] Ibid., p. 177.

critique of the social action role of the Church in their book, *Gideon's Gang*. The basic point of contention these authors have with Dean Kelley's thesis is that he does not understand commitment in terms other than "strictness". Because of this the commitment to a faith stance which involves a person in social action is not viewed by Kelley as appropriate in terms of a strict doctrinal understanding of the Christian faith. Hadden and Longino charge Kelley with paying too much attention to membership growth (through strict disciplined approaches to that membership) by various church groups (Mormons, Southern Baptists, Black Muslims, etc.), and with not attempting to look at what such a disciplined church membership should call for in terms of social action.

Hadden and Longino describe the possibility for the liberal church of re-entering the social action arena through a renewed commitment to a ministry in the world. The social action engaged in by certain elements during the 60's illustrates this possibility. For many that activity led to new hope for the church, and an increased commitment to both the church and a specific cause. In addition, there was a legitimization of the church's involvement in social action. While Kelley calls for a more serious proclamation of the Word and doctrines of the faith along with a strict disciplined approach to church membership, Hadden and Longino call for a translation of the proclamation into action, and moving a disciplined life of faith into a real commitment to witnessing as a servant to those in need. They indicate the potential that exists within the church to reverse the retreat from social action ministry, and through the examples of the experimental Congregation for Reconciliation projects show us the significant proof of that potential.

3. Future congregational development strategies

In considering what models may best support social action ministries in the local church, it is encouraging to note the direction of denominational departments charged with new congregational development. A position paper written by Rev. Robert J. Harman, a staff person in the Office of Church Extension of the United Methodist Church, has direct bearing on the concern for what new models may be needed and could emerge on the local church level.

Rev. Harman states that "changes in strategy and function of new church development"[5] will be necessary to meet the institutional needs of the mission of the Church as it is carried out in a much more complex societal framework. What factors will shape the strategy of new church development, and how these will relate to the forms of institutional life of the church which can best serve its goals and mission is the point to which I now turn.

In describing the goals which shape the institution of the church, Rev. Harman refers to Donald Metz's study of new congregations, *New Congregations, Security and Mission in Conflict*. Metz distinguishes between formal and survival goals, and states this distinction in this way:

> The formal goals of the congregation are presumably those of the church, of which each congregation is the proximate empirical expression....Survival goals are concerned primarily with the

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[5]Robert J. Harman, "Church Extension: Where to From Here?" (United Methodist Church, Office of Church Extension, August 1975).

continuation of the organization, without reference to its service to the formal goals.[6]

These goals are seen to conflict, and indeed survival goals supercede formal goals in many instances. Rev. Harman analyzes this possibility, and says:

> When institutional survival takes the place of formal goals of the church, the distinctive contribution which the church can make in society is neutralized.[7]

With the emergence of these survival goals as more important than the formal goals of the Church the theological basis for the Church is compromised. The focus of the theology being articulated becomes privatistic in nature, the emphasis on personal faith and growth rather than on being a servant people in mission to the world. New congregational development should reverse this trend, and Rev. Harman argues for:

> a missional analysis for developing congregations that restores the formal goals...absent from much of our new congregational experience.[8]

Rev. Harman calls for "a new church for a new era",[9] based on a theological understanding derived from the future-oriented eschatological theology of Johannes Metz. This theology which calls on the church "to live for the promised future of God",[10] is directly related to the form the Church will take. Rev. Harman states this understanding in these words:

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[6]Ibid., p. 7.

[7]Ibid., p. 8.

[8]Ibid., p. 9

[9]Ibid., p. 12.

[10]Harman, op. cit., p. 12.

The new theology is, for all operative purposes, inseparable from ecclesiology. The theology is only as good as the manner and mechanism in which it is made operative.[11]

The form of the Church is determined by two aspects of the formal goals referred to above, the sacramental and mission functions of the Church. These are described in the following manner:

Of the two the mission function is uppermost. The Church exists to attest to and facilitate the Kingdom of God. But it is the sacramental function which continually calls persons to mind the dimensions of the Kingdom of God, what it is that God and man intend to co-create.[12]

The sacramental function is the means through which persons come to know what God's word is and who they should be in response to that Word. Worship becomes the setting for this understanding to take place. Within worship the sacramental function operates "to place before people the summons to co-responsibility."[13] Rev. Harman describes the mission function as "critical reflection on the human community, i.e., prophetic utterance and action."[14]

Rev. Harman's understanding of the Church as servant community, as an institution charged to be God's agent in the world, brings him to a position which calls for a new institutional shape for those congregations which may emerge. This new shape is defined in part by an understanding of development as "seeking to employ the potential in a changing environment for the service of human ends."[15] He expands this

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[11]Harman, p. 12.

[12]Ibid., p. 13.

[13]Harman, op. cit., p. 13.

[14]Harman, p. 14.

[15]Ibid., p. 16.

definition by saying that as a part of development the church must

> appropriate a new language of evangelism which addresses persons at
> the point of their strength and challenges them to exercise their
> power constructively and redemptively.16

Rev. Harman calls for the churches to carefully plan a strategy

to implement those institutional forms which can best serve to accom-

plish the formal goals he outlines. One aspect of such a strategy

would be to organize new congregational units around functions or shared

values. He says of this possibility:

> Organizing units around the shared values of its members intensifies
> the church's sacramental (and mission) function by placing its
> announcement and celebration of the emerging Kingdom of God squarely
> within those secular systems its members frequent.17

In addition to organizing around functions or shared values, Rev. Harman

sees community self-determination as an important factor in new congre-

gational development. In concert with group decision-making a new

ministerial leadership style is required. Empowering laity for a pri-

mary mission role means that clergy must be "re-trained for carrying on

enabling functions within congregations."18

Rev. Harman points to a variety of new congregational forms

which are being created to perform the sacramental and mission functions

of the church in more effective ways. He summarizes by saying that no

one model can best meet the requirements of the church in every situation,

but that new church development must create those institutional forms

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16Ibid.

17Ibid., p. 19.

18Ibid., p. 22.

which accomplish the function of the Church "to advance the Kingdom and
see to it that its benefits are shared by all God's people."[19]

This new understanding of congregational development is seen also
in a recent publication, *Strategies for New Churches*, by Ezra Earl Jones.
He describes various types of congregations, one of which he calls the
"special purpose church". He describes such a congregation in the follow-
ing manner:

> The special purpose congregation...structures its program around one
> issue or style of ministry....Because it attracts people who want
> the unique kind of ministry that it has to offer, it may be located
> almost anywhere.[20]

Dr. Jones has more to say about the basic principles by which one can
understand new congregational development. I will refer to these in
more detail later in the chapter.

B. TWO MODELS FOR ACCOMPLISHING SOCIAL ACTION ON THE LOCAL CHURCH LEVEL

Having reviewed a number of contemporary social action projects in
Chapter 2, and having sought to establish the existence of both a favorable
climate and denominational commitment for supporting new models for social
action ministry in the preceding section, I want to describe the two models
which seem most promising for accomplishing social action on the local
church level. The models are the task force model, and the social action
congregation.

1. The task force model

The task force model is the more conventional approach because

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[19]Ibid., p. 25.

[20]Ezra Earl Jones, *Strategies for New Churches* (New York:
Harper and Row, 1976), p. 42.

of its relationship to such concepts as the Wesleyan study groups, social action committees within local churches, and other types of *ecclesiola in ecclesia* groups. The structural setting of the task force within a local congregation has both positive and negative implications for its effectiveness because of its relationship to a congregation not directly involved in its social action projects. Therefore, time must be spent to interpret the various action projects to the larger congregation. In addition, unless the task force operates in some semi-autonomous fashion, many decisions may require lengthy discussion and debate--further draining off the available time and energy for actual social action. Finally, this model might lead to a separatist movement within a congregation wherein the task force might become isolated from the mainstream of congregational life. There are, however, advantages to this model. A task force would have a solid financial base (assuming basic decisions would be made as to funding before implementing a task force); the task force might be able to draw on a variety of staff and program resources more available within a functioning congregation; a task force could seek to relate itself to the total ministry of a congregation and possibly expand its impact by a variety of projects in worship, education, etc., as well as drawing additional strength from new members who could be added.

What would be the basic characteristics of a task force? A clear definition of working relationships to the decision-making bodies of the congregation would be needed. Goals would need to be outlined, and accountability for these goals maintained. Since a congregation would be its support base, the senior minister's support would be

essential, and if possible an associate might be assigned full-time to

work with such a task force. Hadden and Longino describe such a model,

and in terms of clergy support see the following as necessary:

> First is a sympathetic and skillful senior pastor who will encourage
> and facilitate, while running interpretive interference with con-
> servative laity. Second is an assistant pastor knowledgeable and
> political enough to defend the legitimacy and credibility of the
> group while heading off abrasive activities and statements by the
> members.[21]

Hadden and Longino suggest that such a task force might grow into a

separate congregation, and that is a possibility. Another way for a

social action congregation to be developed, and the second model I wish

to describe, is one combining the strong points of the Congregation for

Reconciliation experiments described in *Gideon's Gang*. A social action

congregation could be developed from the ground up, and I want to suggest

such a strategy for the creation of this model.

2. The social action congregation

In *Strategies for New Churches* Ezra Earl Jones lists several

basic principles in his consideration of new institutional forms of the

church. Among these are several significant for my concern in this paper:

> The congregation is the basic unit of mission in the Christian Church...
> New church development has two major foci: (a) creating a religious
> fellowship and (b) building a strong social institution....The moti-
> vation for creating new congregations determines their success or
> failure. If the primary reason is to extend the ministry of the
> Church, it will rarely fail....
>
> New congregations can contribute significantly to the larger Church
> as they use their freedom from set patterns and traditions to build

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[21]Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles F. Longino, *Gideon's Gang*
(Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974), p. 230.

models of new forms and styles of congregational life.[22]

Finally, Dr. Jones points to the need for adequate preliminary planning in selecting a pastor, locating the church, and providing sufficient financial support for the new congregation he sees possible to emerge.

Creating congregations committed to a strong emphasis on a social action ministry will require creative and resourceful denominational leadership. Hadden and Longino suggest it may mean securing funding from other than denominational sources. [23] They further propose that congregational or denominational consent be tied to the forms new social action may take, and that the Church itself become an arena for social change in its use of increased educational and theological interpretation. An informed lay consensus supporting a social action ministry is essential to bringing lay persons closer to the social action stance of many clergy persons. And also, a well-trained and highly-skilled professional leadership is needed to facilitate such new ministry efforts.

Congregations designed to accomplish social action ministries will emerge, but their success will depend on the factors listed above in addition to the most important ingredient--a worshipping base which distinguishes such a group from any secular activist group working on social reform. More importantly, a community of worshippers will be more effective in interpreting the Word of God in the social milieu, and because of that it will more easily relate to those traditional congregations who see proclamation in strictly conventional terms.

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[22]Jones, pp. 173-174.

[23]Hadden and Longino, p. 231.

Those congregations which are able to support effective social
action ministries will differ in character from other congregations only
in their emphasis on social action. Each congregation must continue to
be a place for community worship and for the teaching of the Faith. If
worship or education cease, then the social action would be divorced from
its Christian base. When a congregation can develop such a style suc-
cessfully, maintaining its Christian foundation while being dynamically
involved in the world, then it will undoubtedly become a potential haven
for those social activists disenchanted with their own congregations.
Both positive and negative results can occur should this take place.
The new members could strengthen the social action ministry of the new
congregation, but would weaken the potential in their old congregation.
A more favorable result would seem possible.

Congregations which can develop positive social action ministries
can serve as models for those established congregations which have been
unable to interpret their existence into action. Institutional churches
can become more vital instruments for social change, and both the task
force model and the social action congregation seem to be positive con-
tributions to that end.

A CONCLUDING STATEMENT

After attempting to establish a theological rationale for a
ministry of social action as one of the marks of the local church ex-
pression of the Christian Church, and listing several models which seem
to have elements for enabling successful social action to be accomplished,
I have sought in this last chapter to define the two models which appear
to hold the most promise. I am convinced that an authentic commitment
in faith to the call of Jesus Christ will lead one into service in the
world to those in need. This service can best occur from a shared
community of believers who worship, learn and serve together. The form
of the Church in the future is still problematic, but to be the minister-
ing agency of the Lord this form must contain strategies for involvement
such as those I have attempted to explore. Our world is more complex
with each day that passes, and the Church must respond to the needs of
this world with a sophisticated and well-trained social action ministry.

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